

Honorable Members of the Connecticut General Assembly,

I send this correspondence to voice my concern over the proposed border tolls currently before the Transportation Committee. As a resident of North Thompsonville in incorporated Enfield, the placement of toll collection operations on Interstate 91 will directly impact my community in several ways. Though I am not fully versed in the details of the proposal, there are realistically only two places that could house the toll operation; north of exit 49 at the state line or, south of exit 49 and north of the Brainard Rd overpass. Either option has definitive drawbacks.

Placement of toll operations at or south of the state line will result in a significant increase of vehicle traffic on US Route 5. This statement is supported by direct observation of the conditions immediately following a major vehicular accident north of exit 47. In an attempt to avoid the traffic jam, drivers exit the interstate resulting in further congestion along Rte 5. Without the benefit of breakdown lanes, this congestion slows the response of emergency vehicles, delays the timely transport of our children on their school buses, and reduces the patronage of businesses along the corridor. Toll operations will, in effect, create this situation on an ongoing basis as drivers (and more precisely, tractor-trailers) attempt to avoid paying the tolls.

In addition to this issue, border tolls are, in fact, a new form of taxation on residents who frequently cross into Massachusetts. Connecticut residents already pay federal and state taxes for the upkeep of the national interstate system. We should not be penalized for crossing into another state, or for that matter, returning home. While I realize the stated intent of the legislation is to collect fees from non-residents traveling into Connecticut, it is invariably the local populations that regularly traverse these border crossings. These residents would disproportionately subsidize future infrastructure projects, the funding of which had previously been appropriated through regular taxation and subsequently squandered from the General Fund over many decades by myriad Governors and Legislators of both parties.

The best way to increase revenues to the state is through an expanding commercial and manufacturing base. This starts with improving the business climate in Connecticut. Tolls and higher taxes only serve to drive businesses away from our state by increasing the total cost of doing business. A better environment leads to more businesses, higher paying jobs and a larger tax base from which to generate revenue. Rather than trying to divine schemes for drawing revenue from an already overburdened citizenry, we should focus on using the proven methodologies that improve economic conditions and build wealth for all.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,

Jack Willard  
Enfield